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Subject: Hay Seed Harvest and Conservation

Field Distribution: War Board Members, Extension Editors, SCS Regional Information Chiefs, FDA Regional Marketing Reports Chiefs, BAE Regional Analysts, FSA Regional Information Chiefs, FCA Information Agents

Suggested Use: To be used as background material supplementing local angles in press and radio channels and as appropriate fillers in speeches.

An unprecedented international demand and increased domestic requirements for hay and pasture seeds for the production of livestock feed, increasing soil productivity, carpeting airfields, and for other military purposes, have placed the production and harvesting of these seeds high in the list of wartime farm work.

Supplies of seed are needed for large-scale plantings in the areas regained from the enemy and in allied countries where intensive food production has drastically reduced the amount of land devoted to the growing of seed.

Every producer of hay and pasture crops in the United States is urged to harvest the greatest possible volume of the 1943 crop of these seeds to increase the available supply for governmental use and for planting needs in this country.

Adequate returns to farmers who cooperate in the seed harvest are provided for by Government price-support programs, through Commodity Credit Corporation loans and purchases. These support-price programs are the first of Nation-wide scope for seed so far announced by the War Food Administration.

The demand for hay and pasture seeds is so urgent that the inability of a farmer to harvest for the market should not prevent his harvesting at least enough seed for his own use in planting next year's crops.

Harvesting even 1 acre of alfalfa seed in addition to a farmer's own needs would provide enough seed at the average yield of 2 bushels per acre, to plant 8 to 10 acres of alfalfa in a liberated area in the war zone.

Sudan, crested wheat, and timothy seed are especially wanted for planting in Russia where a great quantity of alfalfa seed can also be used.

England can make efficient use now of orchard grass, timothy, some redtop, red clover, and white clover as well as other hay and pasture seeds.

Both the value and the amount of hay and pasture seed gleaned in farm harvesting will depend upon the time of cutting and the careful handling of the cut plants before they are threshed.

Usually the second crop of red clover and alfalfa, or a crop that has been grazed, will provide a more uniform seed harvest than the first crop. Thin stands of alfalfa yield more seed than a thick crop.

Pollination by bees and other insects, essential for seed production and abundant seed yield of legumes, is more complete in the dry months when the second crop is growing. Bee flights are not delayed so much by rains at this time, and the decrease in other flowering plants concentrates bee activities on hay and pasture-crop blossoms.

Clovers, because of their small seed and tendency to shatter easily, and the frequent green regrowth of the plants at seed maturity, are generally harvested more successfully by the windrow method, whether threshed by combine or clover huller. The combine used in harvesting clover seed should be of the stationary type so that the straw can be saved more easily. Although this straw is not of high feed value, it will furnish some nutrients and aid in stretching other feed supplies.

In the harvesting of alfalfa seed, cutting time is particularly important because the seed ripen unevenly and overripe pods shatter easily. Generally an adequate harvest is obtained by cutting when from two-thirds to three-fourths of the seed pods are brown. Mowing and windrowing is considered more successful than direct combining.

Lespedeza seeding habits vary. The Korean variety can be combined with smaller loss because the mature seeds are held more firmly in place than in the other varieties. When harvested with a mower, all annual varieties should be cut when the plants are mature and brown, and windrowed late in the day or early morning when the plants are damp, to decrease shattering. Sericea, when harvested with a mower, should be cut before the tips of the growing plants are brown but when the seeds are firm.

Timothy seed harvesting is successful with the grain binder and thresher or either by combining directly or from the windrow. If a large acreage is to be harvested, windrowing part of the acreage will be a safeguard against shattering. Hulling is not necessary for timothy seed, as germination of the seed with hulls is usually higher than that of the hulled seed.

Essentially, harvesting methods for other hay and pasture seed crops vary little from the methods in general use for the legumes and for timothy, which is one of the most important hay grasses cultivated in America. Among other commercial grasses, redtop has the smallest seed and as a result is easily freed from other seeds by screening. Tall meadow oatgrass on the other hand is particularly difficult to harvest because the seed shatter before they reach maturity. Orchard grass, one of the most useful pasture grasses because it comes on early and can be pastured late in the fall, Department agronomists report, has excellent seed habits and produces an abundance of highly germinable seed which can be easily harvested and cleaned.

Government price-supporting loans are available on 20 kinds of hay and pasture seeds, including alfalfa; red, biennial white, and yellow sweetclover; biennial mixed sweetclover; alsike clover; ladino clover; timothy; smooth brome-grass; orchard grass; slender, western, and crested wheatgrass; blue grama, buffalo, Bermuda, Dallis, and Bahia grass; and meadow fescue.

Basic loan values offered and the requirements for grading, cleaning, bagging, and other handling details were set after conferences with representatives of the seed producers and the seed trade.

The seed purchase program covers eight types of pastures and legume seed that are grown chiefly in the Southern States: Blue lupine, white clover, wild winter peas, hop clover, and Kobe, common, Tennessee 76, and sericea varieties of lespedeza. (Press release 2249-43, April 30, 1943, and press release 1593-43, February 15, 1943.)

